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HEADLINE: Won \$ 300G In AIDS Suit, Now Faces 2 Charges

BYLINE: By Beth Holland. STAFF WRITER

BODY:

Reputed mobster Gregory Scarpa, who won \$ 300,000 in an AIDS suit last week, was arrested twice yesterday, first on a state weapons charge and later on a federal murder conspiracy count.

Scarpa, a reputed capo in the Colombo crime family, was released after his arraignment on the gun charge yesterday, but was in federal custody last night pending an arraignment on the conspiracy charge.

FBI spokesman Joseph Valiquette said Scarpa, 64, was charged with conspiracy to commit murder in connection with the attempted assassination of reputed Colombo soldier William Cutolo, 42, during the mob wars in Brooklyn last fall.

Scarpa, who is dying of AIDS, was escorted after his arrest to a doctor's office for a checkup, and is scheduled to have a blood transfusion tomorrow, Valiquette said. He was awaiting arraignment last night at the Metropolitan Correctional Center in lower Manhattan.

Yesterday morning, Scarpa surrendered at the 84th Precinct to Det. Jon Willoughby of the Police Department's Organized Crime Investigative Division. The charges of third-degree criminal weapons possession and resisting arrest date to March 31, when officers with the investigative unit, during a roundup of reputed mob figures, saw Scarpa drop a gun to the ground in front of 8508 10th Ave. in Dyker Heights, the complaint says.

Scarpa fled the scene in a car. Police recovered a loaded .380-cal. automatic, the complaint says.

Sources said Scarpa successfully avoided arrest on the weapons charge for some months, until he surfaced with the filing of the civil lawsuit alleging he was given AIDS-tainted blood during hernia surgery at Victory Memorial Hospital in 1986.

The weapons charge, the more serious of the two, is a Class D felony with a maximum penalty upon conviction of 2 1/3 to 7 years in prison.

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CBS News Transcripts

SHOW: STREET STORIES (9:00 PM ET)

November 12, 1992, Thursday

TYPE: Profile

LENGTH: 1312 words

HEADLINE: CRIME FAMILY MEMBER USES AIDS DIAGNOSIS AS LICENSE TO KILL

ANCHORS: ED BRADLEY

BODY:

(Theme music)

ED BRADLEY, host:

Authorities say Gregory Scarpa made his reputation as a member of a powerful crime family, living in the shadow of death and violence. But he met his match when he confronted one killer that didn't carry a gun. What followed was a death sentence. But as Harold Dow tells us, this one wasn't a deterrent to crime. Some are calling it, instead, 'a license to kill.'

BAD BLOOD (Footage from crime scenes)

HAROLD DOW: (Voiceover) For the last year and a half, there has been a bloody gangland war being fought on the streets of Brooklyn, New York. So far, at least 13 members of the Colombo crime family have been murdered; another 16 barely escaped with their lives.

(Footage of Carmine Persico)

DOW: (Voiceover) Law enforcement authorities say the violence began as a power play to replace former Colombo boss Carmine "The Snake" Persico, who is now serving 100 years in prison.

(Footage of Dow and Hynes)

Mr. CHARLES HYNES (District Attorney): From, I guess, November the 18th until basically early January, there was this shooting war.

DOW: (Voiceover) Charles Hynes is Brooklyn's district attorney.

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Mr. HYNES: I mean, I have no problem letting these folks blow each other away. It's--I think it's good for us, ultimately. The problem is, you know, most of them don't get annual firing practice. You know, so when they start shooting at each other, they begin to miss, and they--they end up killing innocent people.

(Footage from scene of a crime)

DOW: (Voiceover) Hynes says that when an innocent victim was gunned down last November in what he called 'a mob-controlled bagel shop,' something had to be done.

Mr. HYNES: What we did was, on my orders, we served grand jury subpoenas...

(Footage of Colombo associates)

Mr. HYNES: (Voiceover) ...on 41 Colombo associates, capos and soldiers. It stopped the war because when they're under subpoena, they can't shoot.

They all hide. You know, they--they watch too many, I think, class-C movies.

(Footage of Dow)

DOW: But authorities say there is one man they couldn't stop, a man considered the most feared of Carmine Persico's allies, a man who police say is probably responsible for escalating the Colombo war.

(Footage from July 21, 1986 of Gregory Scarpa)

DOW: (Voiceover) His name is Gregory Scarpa, seen here in a 1986 police surveillance tape.

Mr. HYNES: (Voiceover) Law enforcement sources have identified him over the years as a capo regime, a top lieutenant in the Colombo crime family.

DOW: (Voiceover) Police sources claim Scarpa not only directed some of the mob killings, but committed at least two of the murders himself.

(Footage of Dow and Hynes)

Mr. HYNES: Ordinarily it'd be very unusual for a capo to shoot. He would have any number of people that he could--he could direct hits.

DOW: To carry out a shooting?

Mr. HYNES: Yeah, sure.

DOW: But it's unusual for a capo to do that?

Mr. HYNES: Yeah, very unusual, yeah.

(Footage from 1986 surveillance tape)

DOW: (Voiceover) And the reason, police say, this capo began to shoot is even more unusual...

(Footage of Scarpa in July, 1986, and today)

DOW: (Voiceover) ...for this is what Gregory Scarpa looks like today, his body ravaged by AIDS. His doctors have given him only months to live.

(Footage of Scarpa walking in a building)

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Mr. SCARPA: (Voiceover) This is the hand that was dealt to me. I'll play the hand. If I could outbluff the opponent, which is death, fine. If I can't, I lose the hand.

DOW: (Voiceover) Last summer Scarpa showed up in a courtroom in Brooklyn, New York, just long enough to receive a cash settlement from the hospital he says gave him an AIDS-infected blood transfusion during an operation for a bleeding ulcer.

(Footage of Scarpa walking with another man)

Mr. SCARPA: (Voiceover) I think there were about five or six donations that were used. One of them was HIV infected. His blood wasn't tested, and I received that blood.

DOW: When we chat a little bit, we'll talk a little about maybe some of the feelings you have now and--and what changes you may have gone through.

It's rare for an accused mobster to sit down for an interview, but on this day Gregory Scarpa wanted to send a message to his friends--and to his enemies--that he would not surrender to AIDS.

Mr. SCARPA: I will show them the cards that I've displayed all this time, the bravado. I will show them that, 'Hey, this is still me.' There isn't anything on earth that I will hide from or back up from, and I certainly won't do it with this either.

(Footage of Scarpa being led away in handcuffs)

DOW: (Voiceover) Police say Scarpa had been true to his word. A few days after our conversation, he was arrested and charged with two murders and the conspiracy to commit two more, all within the last year.

Authorities have speculated that because Gregory Scarpa has AIDS, that he used AIDS as a license to kill.

Unidentified Man: From what I know, that's very, very true. He was dying. He wanted to settle scores himself. Nothing for him to lose.

(Footage of a man in silhouette)

DOW: (Voiceover) This man, a high-level member of the Colombo crime family, agreed to speak to STREET STORIES on the condition that we conceal his identity and change his voice.

And even though he has AIDS, and admits himself that he's close to death, you still fear him, even now?

Man: Until he's in the ground, and maybe afterwards, too. Sure.

DOW: Really?

Man: Oh, yeah. There are no candy-store gangsters. I'll tell you that much.

(Footage of a document, photographs of Larry Lampisi and Nick Grancio and Scarpa under arrest)

DOW: (Voiceover) According to Justice Department documents, an informant named Joseph Ambrosini says Scarpa personally committed at least two murders: one, the shooting of a mobster named Larry Lampisi; and the other, the shotgun murder of Nick Grancio, to whom Scarpa allegedly said before firing: 'This one's from Carmine.' A few weeks after his arrest, Scarpa's attorney was able to get him transferred from prison to a nearby hospital, and then released on bail.

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Mr. SCARPA: Come on. Come on. Come on. The allegations that were laid out by the informant are total incomplete allegations. They are totally and completely false. This fella, Joe--Joseph Ambrosini, is a--is a person that--that I wouldn't even allow myself to talk to.

DOW: Who is Ambrosini?

Man: He worked for Scarpa. Whatever Scarpa told him to do, he would do. They were very close.

Mr. SCARPA: If he was there, let them charge him with the murders not me, because I wasn't.

DOW: Authorities have a theory that Gregory Scarpa got AIDS and he used AIDS as a license to kill.

Mr. SCARPA: If I'm--if I'm to be what they allege me to be, why do I need AIDS to be that way? I could be that way without having AIDS.

(Footage of Scarpa in front of his house surrounded by balloons and a poster that says 'We Love You Poppa')

DOW: (Voiceover) Today Gregory Scarpa is under house arrest and under 24-hour surveillance. He's facing two murder charges and a death sentence from AIDS, but Scarpa intends to stay tough until the end.

Mr. SCARPA: It's a killer. No question about it. It's a killer, and I accept it. Maybe I'll get lucky and get a heart attack and not die of the AIDS virus. A heart attack, bango. It's all over.

(Music played)

BRADLEY: While Gregory Scarpa continues his battle with AIDS, another battle rages. In the last six weeks, there have been six shootings in what police say is the continuing Colombo crime war.

Next on STREET STORIES you'll meet some Kansas housewives who answer the question, 'Where's the beef?'

(Footage of women trying to corral cattle)

Mrs. BECKY WAY (Real Estate Supervisor): They're all supposed to go that way!

(Theme music)

LOAD-DATE: April 28, 1998